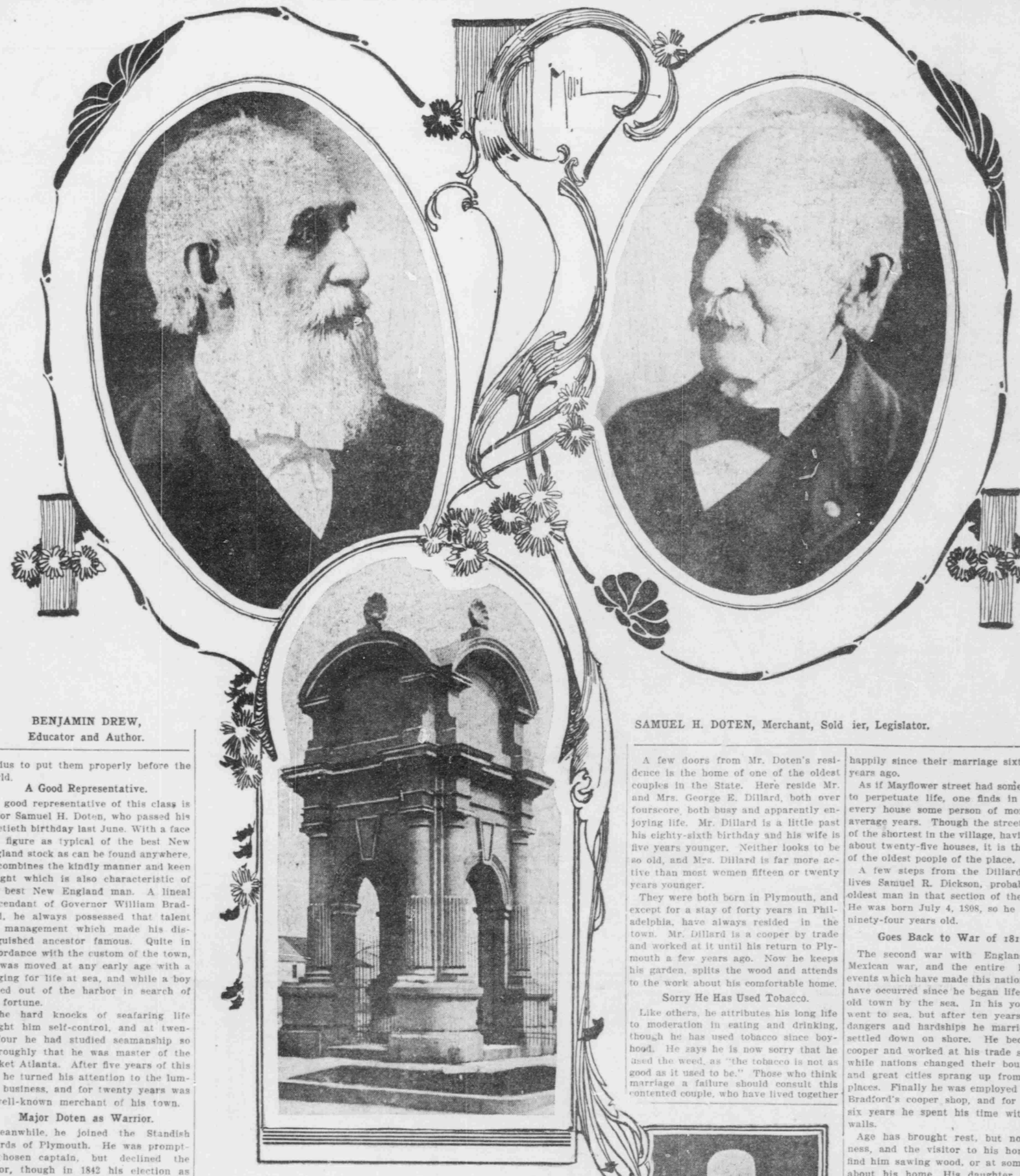
STRENGTH OF THE PILGRIMS ABIDES THROUGH CENTURIES

Virile Old Men of Eighty, Ninety, and Even More Years Who Live Near the Historic Rock and Refute the Gloomy Reflection That Man Is as Grass and His Days Are But Threescore and Ten.

Men Who Heard "Peace!" "Peace!" Cried in the Streets at the Close of the Second War With England Attribute Their Health and Ripe Years to Simple Living and Unimpassioned Habits of Thought.



BENJAMIN DREW, Educator and Author.

SAMUEL H. DOTEN, Merchant, Soldier, Legislator.

PLYMOUTH ROCK.

SAMUEL R. DICKSON, Plymouth's Oldest Workman.

THE strength of the Pilgrims still remains to the dwellers in Plymouth. The descendants of the people who came in the Mayflower and the Anne are strong in their inheritance from those who founded a State. The strong bodies and clean minds which were brought to the New England coast nearly three hundred years ago, have been perpetuated among the inhabitants of that town by the sea, made historic by the aspirations and sacrifices of great hearts. Walking in the streets of the famous town or driving along the country roads one meets everywhere the descendants of the real first families of New England and sees in them the visible manifestation of the ideals which have made our Government what it is.

The Strength of the Old.

In visiting the town, nothing is more apparent than the strength possessed by the old. At the time of life at which those in most communities find nothing so attractive as the warm fireside, and idle hours of dreaming, these sturdy people seem to be more than ever interested in the work which they have to do. Men of seventy-five or eighty do a full day's work in the fields; women who have seen four-score go about their daily housework almost with the vigor of youth. In commerce, trade and social life, these strong men and women lead, as in their youth, and are happy in doing so.

Out in the country this unusual longevity is especially noticeable. For example, there is a little settlement numbering some 300 people in the neighborhood of the Second Congregational Church, where almost every house shelters someone who is more than four-score years.

Young Men of Eighty Years.

Here one may find David Clark, a descendant of the pilot of the Mayflower, strong after the storms of eighty-two winters, working in the fields beside the younger generations. A selectman until very recently and prominent in the affairs in his town, he keeps well abreast with the times, holding to the faith of the fathers and enjoying the sure rewards of their stern morality.

Cornelius Briggs, a year older, and George Griswold, a year younger, are his near neighbors, and they, too, enjoy life as he does. Near them is Mrs. Isaac Holmes, a member of the Wadsworth family, and a relative of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. On the adjoining farms one may find eight or ten people who have passed the fourscore-year limit with minds and bodies still strong.

Typical Old Clergyman.

It was in this parish that the Rev. John Dwight, one of the most effective of the preachers of the town in his time, lived and labored during former generations. A graduate of Amherst, a pupil of Dr. Jacob Ide, of Medway, he spared no pains to make plain the doctrines of the early church. Predestination, foreordination, and all that was regarded as a necessary part of a doctrine sufficient for salvation were laid before his hearers as doctrines to be believed and lived by, and so earnestly did he work that no preacher of that church before or since has ever secured such satisfactory results.

He passed away years ago, but he is reverently remembered by the people he served, and he may well be counted a perfect type of the clergyman of former days.

Pastor an Armenian.

The pastor of the church, who is, strangely enough, an Armenian, and who fled from the persecutions of European bigotry as the founders of the church did centuries ago, attributes the health and strength of his people as much to the equanimity of mind which their isolation from modern life brings them as to the healthfulness of the locality. It is probably true, however, that the largest factor is a physical and mental inheritance comparatively unsullied for centuries.

Inquiry throughout the township confirms the claim that nowhere in the United States is there so large a percentage of very old people. One may easily count up about thirty men who are over eighty years old, and several of these are past their ninetieth birthday. The number of women who are of an equally advanced age is slightly larger.

Never Too Old to Vote.

Reference to the records of the town clerk shows that about 120 of the voters are over seventy years old, and of these a large percentage are only a little under eighty. These men are, almost without exception, still actively interested in common affairs of life, and many of them are doing the same hard work to which they have always been accustomed. Not only the farmers but many in the village are performing heavy manual labor, and important positions are in other communities would be considered too old to attempt the work.

Nearly all of these have interesting histories. Many of them have been in foreign lands and remote islands in their youth; most of them have taken part in the great movements of the political and industrial world during the past seventy-five years. Their keen minds respond actively to inquiries as to their strange experiences and many sea tales and stories of adventure await the coming of some writer with the genius to put them properly before the world.

A Good Representative.

A good representative of this class is Major Samuel H. Doten, who passed his ninetieth birthday last June. With a face and figure as typical of the best New England stock as can be found anywhere, he combines the kindly manner and keen insight which is also characteristic of the best New England man. A lineal descendant of Governor William Bradford, he always possessed that talent for management which made his distinguished ancestor famous. Quite in accordance with the custom of the town, he was moved at any early age with a longing for life at sea, and while a boy sailed out of the harbor in search of his fortune.

The hard knocks of seafaring life taught him self-control, and at twenty-four he had studied seamanship so thoroughly that he was master of the packet Atlanta. After five years of this life he turned his attention to the lumber business, and for twenty years was a well-known merchant of his town.

Major Doten as Warrior.

Meanwhile, he joined the Standish Guards of Plymouth. He was promptly chosen captain, but declined the honor, though in 1842 his election as lieutenant commander overcame his reluctance to hold office. At the fall of Fort Sumter his natural leadership was brought out, and among the first to go to the front was Captain Doten, with his company, as part of the old Third Massachusetts Regiment.

As though protected by fate, three years of marching and fighting did not undermine his wonderful constitution. Antietam, Vicksburg, and a score of other battles he passed in safety, and he returned home safely, except for an attack of malarial fever, an enemy which even a resident of the rock-bound coast could not expect to overcome without a struggle.

Prominent in G. A. R.

Before his return he had been made a brevet major for efficiency and bravery in the field.

Since then he has been prominent in the G. A. R. and a member of the grand encampment. He is also one of the oldest Odd Fellows in New England. He was the first of that order in Plymouth, and was a charter member, the only one who now survives, of the Odd Fellows' lodge at Plymouth. He has been highly honored by the Odd Fellows of the State, but is probably most widely known in fraternal circles because of his connection with the Masonic order, he having attained a high rank in the order.

Major Doten as Collector.

His share in political life has been considerable, and he has held several offices. For seven years he was collector of the port of Plymouth, and was registrar of probate for a like period. In 1858, and the year following, he was a member of the house of representatives.

He attributes his long life and general good health largely to his temperate habits. From his early boyhood he has been an active temperance worker, and has not only abstained from liquor, but from excesses of all kinds. Those who visit his house find nothing to indicate any loss of interest in daily affairs, and he is still a fine specimen of mental and physical vigor in old age.

Wife Four Years Younger.

Mrs. Doten is only four years younger than her husband, with whom she has lived fifty-four years, and is still interested in life and its activities.

Across the street lives the mayor's younger brother, Charles C. Doten, a member of the river and harbor commission, who carries his three-score years and ten easily and takes a leading place in the management of affairs in his department of the State government. The Doten family have been long-lived for many generations, and its present members seem likely to keep the traditions of their fathers unbroken in this respect.

A few doors from Mr. Doten's residence is the home of one of the oldest couples in the State. Here reside Mr. and Mrs. George E. Dillard, both over fourscore, both busy and apparently enjoying life. Mr. Dillard is a little past his eighty-sixth birthday and his wife is five years younger. Neither looks to be so old, and Mrs. Dillard is far more active than most women fifteen or twenty years younger.

They were both born in Plymouth, and except for a stay of forty years in Philadelphia, have always resided in the town. Mr. Dillard is a cooper by trade and worked at it until his return to Plymouth a few years ago. Now he keeps his garden, splits the wood and attends to the work about his comfortable home.

Sorry He Has Used Tobacco.

Like others, he attributes his long life to moderation in eating and drinking, though he has used tobacco since boyhood. He says he is now sorry that he used the weed, as "the tobacco is not as good as it used to be." Those who think marriage a failure should consult this contented couple, who have lived together happily since their marriage sixty-three years ago.

As if Mayflower street had some charm to perpetuate life, one finds in almost every house some person of more than average years. Though the street is one of the shortest in the village, having only about twenty-five houses, it is the home of the oldest people of the place.

A few steps from the Dillard house lives Samuel R. Dickson, probably the oldest man in that section of the State. He was born July 4, 1808, so he is over ninety-four years old.

Goes Back to War of 1812.

The second war with England, the Mexican war, and the entire list of events which have made this nation great have occurred since he began life in the old town by the sea. In his youth he went to sea, but after ten years of its dangers and hardships he married and settled down on shore. He became a cooper and worked at his trade steadily while nations changed their boundaries and great cities sprang up from waste places. Finally he was employed in Sam Bradford's cooper shop, and for thirty-six years he spent his time within its walls.

Age has brought rest, but not idleness, and the visitor to his home will find him sawing wood, or at some work about his home. His daughter attends him and at times he gathers a numerous family about him.

In Poor Health at Times.

Two of his children, eight grandchildren and twenty-two great-grandchildren survive, and he has reason to feel that if his life has lacked something of wealth and power, he has secured at least the Scriptural blessings of long life and many descendants.

He is an advocate of abstinence from the use of liquors and remarks that though he used to use tobacco he has not done so for the past sixty years. Unlike most of those who have attained to a great age, he has been in poor health at times and in middle life was so weakened by illness that for some years he was not expected to live long.

Long Ages in Short Street.

On this short street also, if the assessors' last report is still correct, live Thomas N. Eldridge, seventy; Samuel Nelson, seventy-nine; B. D. Freeman, seventy-three; Gideon Holbrook, eighty-two; Calvin L. Dickson, sixty-five, and five or six others who are nearly sixty. This does not include women of advanced age, and it is probable that in the twenty-five houses of the street there are at least twenty-five people who are well past the three score years that commonly passes as the limit of the age of mankind.

While the average age of the rest of the town must be far below that of the residents of this street, there is undoubtedly a larger proportion of its inhabitants who are endowed with the requisite of long life than can be found elsewhere.

Work of Benjamin Drew.

Nearer the center of the town one may find another of those who have been given "strength for the days" in the person of Benjamin Drew.

His earliest recollection is of boys running through the streets of Plymouth shouting "Peace!" "Peace!" "Peace!" and he later learned that they were celebrating the close of the second war with England. He was then three years old, having been born in 1812.

Now, in his ninety-first year, he looks back upon a career of work for a higher ideal of education longer than that covered by two ordinary lifetimes. In addition to his remarkable health and vigor for one of his years, his life is interesting because of his achievements for education and his contributions to historical literature, and this interest is not decreased by the thought that he is the father of the only American mandarin in China.

Learned the Printer's Trade.

Mr. Drew was a playmate of Major Doten, though few others remain of the people he knew in boyhood. When quite a young man he learned the printer's trade in the office of the "Old Colony Memorial," which at that early day was a well established and influential paper.

Some of the political leaders of the town, desiring to secure a different kind of newspaper, engaged Mr. Drew, then only nineteen, to undertake the charge of the new venture. The effort to establish a rival paper died out soon after, and the young editor engaged in teaching, a pursuit to which he devoted forty years of his life.

School Was Named for Him.

He soon left his school in his native town and for thirty-five years was a professor and principal of various public schools in Boston. During this time he was master of the Phillips School and the Otis School, and connected with the work in the Glover and Mathew Schools. Shortly before the civil war he went to St. Paul, Minn., where he for a time was principal of the city schools, and helped organize the educational work of the growing town, and for his work he is gratefully remembered by the people of St. Paul, one of the city school buildings having been given his name.

His writings include a well-known work on printing and a series of narratives told by escaped slaves in Canada, whom he interviewed. These were published under the title, "North Side View of Slavery." He also prepared a book containing a copy of the inscription on the monuments in the old cemetery at Plymouth.

Mr. Drew at Home in China.

Although, unlike the other boys of the old town, he had failed to go to sea, he has not missed the experience. He spent his seventieth birthday with his son, Edward Bangs Drew, a Chinese mandarin in Shanghai. The journey occupied a year, and included a long visit to the home of his son, who has attained power and influence beyond that of any foreign resident of China, by his ability in administering the affairs of the Chinese customs department.

During his stay he was presented with many tokens of profound respect by the Orientals of the custom house, among them being several red posters with elaborately embroidered inscriptions

"A Man With Equal Eyebrows."

One of these recites the fact that he has attained a venerable age, is wise and honorable, calls him "a man with equal eyebrows," and wishes him all manner of joy and prosperity. Probably if he should now visit the Celestial empire he would be regarded as a more wonderful and venerable man than he was twenty years ago.

Many others of advanced age might be named, but the facts here recited show that the foundations of Americanism in the home of Bradford and Carver are yet secure. The race is still sound and its children are influential and strong to endure. Those who think New England is going into decay should consider the fact that its original people are proving themselves wonderfully enduring.

It is assurance that there is something in the life of the old New England families that will persist for many generations, making real the ideals upon which the State was founded by the might of the strong and upholding the essentials of a reverent faith in spite of any tendency to bigotry or doubt.

The aristocracy that endures is founded upon an entailed inheritance of sound nerves and strong minds, and to that nobility of body and soul the people of many of our homes are born. The people of Plymouth have not lived greatly because they have lived long, but they have come to a green old age because of a simplicity and fearlessness of life which produces strength for the years.

A HAIR-RAISING FISH STORY FROM THE SEA

September 16 last, on a ship about fifty miles from Brisbane, Australia, a huge shark about twelve feet in length was hooked on a line which broke. A second time the big fish got on the line and escaped. Then a large shark hook with a chain was thrown out and the ravenous brute grabbed it and was caught.

All hands tugged the shark to the vessel's side. A huge hook of the anchor tackle was put through his jaw and one eye, and the fish was then hauled out of the water. One of the crew ripped the monster open from the head to the tail. The vital organs and entrails were thrown overboard and then both jaws hacked out for the sake of saving the teeth.

Nothing but the shell of the fish remained and the shark was lowered overboard. A rush was made to the side to see him sink, but the company was astonished to see the fish make off. First he swam about fifty yards away, returned to the steamer, then went off on another tack for about thirty yards, came back to the vessel and swam astern, and was still swimming when he was lost sight of.

That the fish should swim away with the whole of his interior from head to tail and jaw and one eye gone simply raised the hair of the pilots and crew, who had never seen or heard of the like before.

CAMPAIGN MEDALS FOUND IN PAWNSHOPS

CAMPAIGN medals, tokens of hard service at the front, hanging in a pawnshop window is the strange sight that many people of Washington witness every day. It is not a pleasant sight—for the first thing it suggests is a decline in patriotism, when a man would part with such a coveted token for the trifling sum offered at the counter of a money lender.

These badges, evidences of service in the volunteer ranks in Cuba or in Porto Rico, are supposed to have been given only to those who are legally entitled to them, and their issuance to the veterans of those two campaigns has been watched over with a most jealous supervision. A civilian would think that they would be cherished as something almost sacred in character; that not even the sternest grip of poverty would lead their possessors to relinquish them.

Lenders of money and dealers in second-hand articles generally are a silent class of people when their business and its various methods are concerned. To seek to learn from them how these articles came into their hands is to seek where information is not. You will be answered politely, but evasively. And in all cases the answer is a complete denial of any knowledge concerning the bronze eagles and crosses.

Yet there is no doubt that in some cases the contempt born of familiarity, coupled with a pressing need of money at the time, has led the recipients of these honors to part with them lightly. Their face value is but a trifle. As curiosities they are able to obtain good prices from collectors of medals and historic bronzes and coins. A value, too, attaches to them from a less worthy source. Imposters of a certain sort who seek to back up their tales of Munchausen-like adventures by flood and field with a show of evidence, find these things useful. And they are of use to the begging fraternity in those localities where Soldiers' Homes are not too near and the authorities slow about making investigations.

Many who received these medals did little more than reserve duty; the medals were received by all their comrades as well as themselves. This helped to make them common in the eyes of a large number. So it has been that they have been willing to give the bits of metal up at a time of need.

But everyone knows that much that finds a resting place in pawnshops does not pass there through the hands of rightful owners. The law tries to provide against this, and the pawnbrokers are always on the lookout, since such transactions are not to their interest. Yet soldiers have ever been known as a more or less reckless lot, and the returned volunteers, many of whom found themselves out of work, often drifted into bad company. Those birds of prey who seek victims of this class take all they can get, and that the medals would command a price no one realized better than they.

In addition to a lack of patriotic spirit and the work of thieving fingers, there is a third reason for the presence of military tokens in such places. Whatever is of value is imitated, and these medals offer no difficulties to those who would produce counterfeits. It is said, on good authority, that there is, in New York, an establishment whose business it is to manufacture—or rather to counterfeit—honor medals of many kinds. There have been scattered broadcast over the country, and find a ready market in people who imagine that no one but an actual soldier could obtain them. Their principal use, however, has been discovered by certain mendicants, who palm themselves off as old soldiers.

These fellows operate in this manner: A prosperous looking citizen is approached. The veteran's tale of woe is told. He can get no work; he is too proud to beg. He has nothing left but his medal. Then he weeps; he hates so to part with it; but he will sell it because he must. The victim usually "bites."

CHEERFUL OUTLOOK FOR HIS DEAREST CHUM

A young clergyman tells the following story of the attempt of a member of his flock to console a dying man:

"I was sent for in a hurry to see Captain Waters, but did not get the message as promptly as I should. I arrived just a few minutes after he was dead. One of the members of my church had been with him, however, and to him I expressed my regret that the man had died without spiritual consolation.

"'Oh, you needn't let that worry you, parson,' he replied, cheerfully. "I gave him all the spiritual consolation I could, and he died thankful.'

"'What did you say to him?' I asked.

"'Well, I began something like this: "Bill Water, you have been a mighty wicked man, now, haven't you?" An' he says: "Yes, Jim, I hev." "An' yer can't expect the Lord Almighty to let yer into heaven nohow, now, can yer?" An' he says: "No, Jim, I reckon not." "Well, then, Bill," says I, "I reckon ye'll hev ter go to the other place. Now, Bill, don't yer think after the life ye've led all these years yer ought ter be thankful ye hev even that place ter go to?" An' he was almost too far gone to answer, but he says, "Yas, Jim, I be." An' then he turned over and died very quiet like; an' parson, I reckon you couldn't a' done anything more fer him yerself.'"—Philadelphia Record.